

## **Systematic behavior change in water, sanitation and hygiene – Experiences from implementing the handwashing with soap behavior change project in Zimbabwe**

### **Objectives**

The objective of the market place was to present the main achievements, key findings, challenges and lessons learned from implementing a handwashing with soap behavior change campaign in Zimbabwe in rural and urban contexts. In addition, participants were asked to share their experiences from implementing similar projects and what they have learned, to discuss on ways on how to replicate such campaigns in other contexts and countries, and to discuss on how the private sector can be better involved in such campaigns in a context of difficult economic conditions.

### **Main discussion points (content)**

After a short introduction of the methodology/approach of the project, which is based on five distinct components (1. Pre-study to assess the handwashing and hygiene situation, 2. Quantitative and qualitative baseline to identify the drivers and barriers of handwashing, 3. Design of a population-tailored behavior change campaign based on evidence, 4. Campaign implementation, 5. Quantitative and qualitative follow-up survey to measure the success of the campaign), the main achievements and success stories of the project were presented to the participants. These involve the notable behavior change with regards to sustainable handwashing with soap practice that was achieved by the project with proven effects on the impact level such as the reported reduced incidence of diarrheal diseases both in schools and at the household level, or the increased availability and maintenance of handwashing and sanitation facilities. In addition, project implementation resulted in considerable institutional traction such as the endorsement of the campaign approach (the RANAS model for sustainable behavior change) by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education or the scaling up of the campaign by local authorities beyond the targeted areas using their own available resources. The project also managed to influence the inclusion of handwashing with soap in the National Sanitation and Hygiene policy and strategy.

Key findings from campaign implementation include the importance of collecting baseline data to tailor the campaign design to the target population, as well as the importance of placing handwashing facilities at strategic locations to facilitate the intention and planning to ensure handwashing with soap and to serve as a reminder. Effective and well-designed monitoring systems support the target groups in the behavior change process. In addition, the project provided scientific evidence that the sole focus on children as agents of change does not lead to the desired behavior change at the level of the whole community as the expected spill-over effect did not occur. Targeting the school children and their caregivers concurrently proved to be the most successful implementation mechanism.

The main challenges related to the involvement of the private sector, as Zimbabwe is facing a deteriorating economic environment, which renders engagement of the private sector challenging.

Participants asked whether it was not even possible to involve multi-national companies such as Unilever in the campaign, which again was not possible as Unilever itself has reduced its business in Zimbabwe significantly in recent years. Another challenge related to the non-availability of water in schools and communities and the low quality of water used for washing hands. Therefore it is key to address issues around access to water and soap in order to enable handwashing with soap. A discussion evolved on how the issue of water availability was approached by the project. The schools and communities were encouraged to ensure water management and spare some for handwashing with soap. The adoption and use of tippy taps too regulates water use during handwashing.

One lessons learned is that data-driven campaign design results in interventions tailored to the population based on the psychological understanding of the drivers and barriers of handwashing. It is also important to tackle both the frequency as well as the effective technique of handwashing with soap. Following a multi-level approach based on the principle of training-of-trainers allows cascading of the campaign into communities and scaling up of activities in other areas. In addition, institutional support is imperative to sustaining handwashing with soap.

The RANAS model for sustainable behavior change attracted the interest of participants. Participants were keen to know more about how this theoretical, scientific model has been translated into a practical intervention. For example, the project used white towel demonstrations to trigger awareness and make schools and communities perceive the risk they have if they eat without washing hands thus ultimately affecting their attitude, norms, abilities and self-regulations around handwashing with soap in a positive way.

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